



Al-Rayyan International School



# UNIVERSITY & CAREER GUIDANCE **HANDBOOK**

2025/2026

## ARIS Core Purpose

“We are a diverse community of learners that are committed to **Inspire, Empower** and **Transform** for a better world.”

## ARIS Core Values

- Greatness in Everyone.
- Learning with Everyone
- Creativity and Innovation by Everyone
- Service to Everyone
- Change for Everyone

## ARIS Characteristics

- Responsibility and Respect
- Passion and Mindfulness
- Collaboration and Communication
- Reflection and Action

## IB Mission Statement

The International Baccalaureate Organisation aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. To this end, the IBO works with schools, governments, and international organisations to develop challenging international education programs and rigorous assessments. These programs encourage students worldwide to become active, compassionate, and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be correct.

ARIS offers the following programmes:

- The International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (PYP)
- The International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (MYP)
- The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme. (IBDP)
- The International Baccalaureate Career Programme. (IBCP)

## IB Learner Profile

At ARIS, we believe in the learner profile. It helps us to share our planet and create a better world! Along with your facilitator and classmates, you will learn about the learner profile and have numerous opportunities to embody it.



### INQUIRERS

I am an Inquirer. I am curious to learn new things.



### THINKERS

I am a Thinker. I think and find solutions to problems.



### PRINCIPLED

I am Principled. I follow the rules and take responsibility for my choices. I am honest and fair.



### CARING

I am caring. I try to make things better and more positive. I think about others' feelings.



### BALANCED

I am balanced. I take care of myself and understand it is important to be healthy in my body and mind.



### KNOWLEDGEABLE

I am Knowledgeable. I learn and share my knowledge with others.



### COMMUNICATORS

I am a communicator. I share my views and express my ideas.



### OPEN-MINDED

I am open-minded. I respect others' ideas, suggestions and points of view.



### RISK-TAKERS

I am courageous. I try new things and think about how to solve problems.



### REFLECTIVE

I am reflective. I think about what works and doesn't work and take action to improve

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 About ARIS and Our Mission

Al-Rayan International School (ARIS) is a distinguished IB World School in Ghana and across Africa, known for its journey of inclusion, collaboration, and innovation. Through the ARIS Educational Model, we place students at the core of learning, fostering personalised growth, agency, and meaningful experiences.

Our school's holistic approach empowers students to take ownership of their learning and prepares them to navigate the evolving 21st-century landscape with resilience, creativity, and confidence.

We are deeply committed to student well-being through the ARIS Wellbeing Model, ensuring that every learner is supported in their academic, social, and emotional journey.

## 1.2 Purpose of the Career Handbook

This handbook is a practical guide for ARIS students and families to plan, apply, and transition to life after school. It:

- Clarifies what to do, when, and why—by country/system.
- Maps ARIS internal deadlines to external ones.
- Explains our use of BridgeU and Unifrog with clear steps and roles.
- Answers common questions and points to the right person/resource at ARIS.

## 1.3 How to Use This Handbook

This handbook is a living guide—meant to be read, revisited, and reflected upon at each stage of the university journey.



### **For Students:**

Use it to explore university options, understand requirements, and set goals aligned with your interests.



### **For Parents:**

Gain insight into timelines, scholarship opportunities, and ways to support your child with balance and encouragement.



### **For Educators and Counsellors:**

Reference it during advisory sessions, career guidance meetings, and when providing feedback on applications.

We recommend that students and families review the handbook regularly, especially at major decision points (subject selection, university applications, scholarships).

## 1.4 Embracing the IB Learner Profile in Career Planning

ARIS firmly believes that career planning is not just about university acceptance—it is about cultivating the IB Learner Profile traits that empower lifelong success.

- **Inquirers & Thinkers:** Ask critical questions about future pathways.
- **Knowledgeable:** Make informed choices using accurate information.
- **Principled & Caring:** Consider ethical implications of career paths.
- **Balanced & Reflective:** Maintain well-being while pursuing ambitions.
- **Risk-takers & Communicators:** Explore bold choices and articulate aspirations clearly.

By linking the IB Learner Profile to career planning, ARIS ensures that students prepare for life beyond academics—with character, vision, and purpose.

## 1.5 ARIS University Guidance Philosophy – Our Approach to Student Futures

At ARIS, our philosophy of University and Career Guidance is grounded in three pillars:

**Personalised:** Each student builds a pathway aligned to strengths, values, and context.

**Globally Ready:** We plan across regions (Africa, Europe, N. America, Asia, etc.) with realistic entry routes.

**Holistic:** We integrate grades, portfolios, CAS/service, leadership, internships, and wellbeing.

This philosophy anchors the handbook and ensures that ARIS students step into higher education as self-aware, resilient, and globally minded learners.

## 2. PERSONALIZED UNIVERSITY PLANNING

At ARIS, university and career planning begin early and unfold progressively across all stages of learning, from the Early Years to the Diploma and Career-related Programmes, ensuring that every student develops a strong sense of identity, purpose, and direction.

The journey begins in the Early Years and PYP, where students are nurtured to become curious inquirers who make meaningful connections between their learning and the world around them. Through play-based exploration, transdisciplinary inquiries, and guest speaker engagements, children begin to see the relationship between their interests, the attributes of the IB Learner Profile, and real-world professions. These early exposures lay the foundation for aspiration building and self-awareness, helping learners understand that every inquiry, skill, and concept connects to future possibilities.

In the Middle Years Programme (MYP 1 and 2), students continue this exploration through purposeful opportunities built into the school year. During the academic year orientation sessions, they engage in reflective conversations about their interests and aspirations, imagining where they see themselves three to five years down the line. They are also given opportunities to participate in the ARIS Career Fair, where they interact with professionals, explore different pathways, and begin connecting classroom



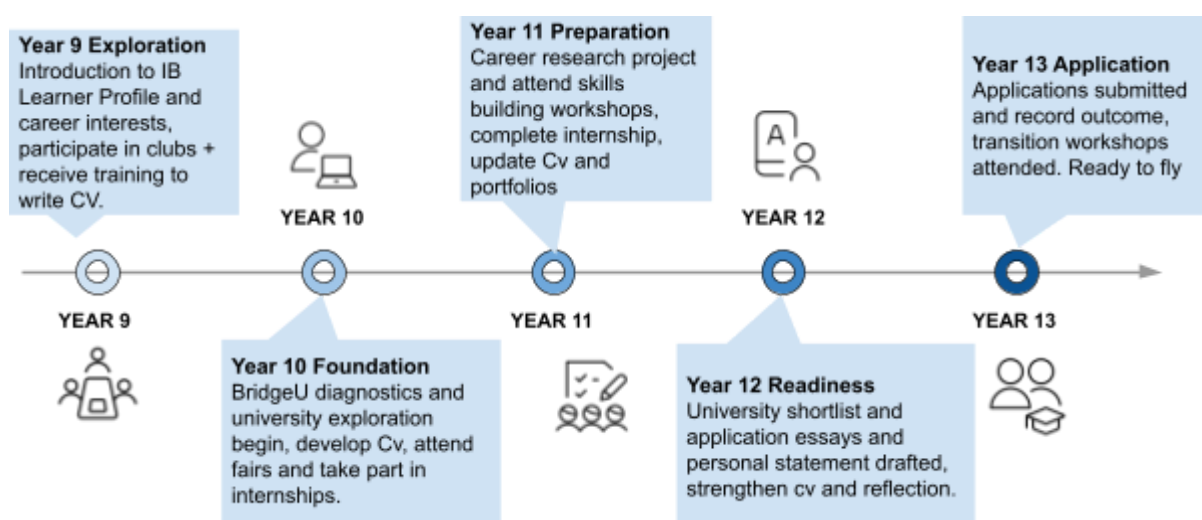
learning with real-world careers. These experiences inspire students to think broadly, set goals, and view themselves as active designers of their future.

By Year 9, the journey becomes more structured through career interest inventories, exploration activities, and exposure to diverse fields of study. In Years 10–11, this exploration evolves into informed subject selection and skill-building, guided by counsellors who help align academic choices with career aspirations.

Finally, in Years 12–13, students engage in comprehensive **university and career planning**, supported by counsellors, coordinators, and mentors. They learn to make informed decisions, develop professional portfolios, and transition confidently into higher education.

ARIS uses an integrated approach with **BridgeU** (for planning, shortlists, submissions, and tracking) and **Unifrog** (for reflections, CV/activities, essay drafting, and portfolios). Together, these platforms ensure every student develops a pathway that is realistic, personalised, and future-ready.

## 2.1 How ARIS Does It



### Early Exploration (Years 9)

- Introduction to the IB Learner Profile and its link to career pathways.
- Career interest surveys and self-assessment activities (values, strengths, aspirations).
- Participation in Career Day and Career Interest Assessments.
- Exploration of extracurriculars, leadership, and service opportunities both within and beyond school — students are encouraged to join

clubs, varsity teams, and community-based initiatives where they can contribute and make a difference.

- Begin to **gather evidence** from projects, service activities, and leadership experiences to create their first **career portfolio**.
- **Early CV Writing:** Students are introduced to the concept of a CV and learn how to document their achievements, skills, and experiences as evidence of personal growth.
- Encouraged to pursue **summer courses, volunteering, or community engagement** to extend learning beyond the classroom.
- **Early Subject Guidance:** Counsellors begin helping students think about future IB subject combinations, linking choices to interests and career aspirations. This ensures students see the connection between their current learning, career options, and the IB Diploma/CP pathways ahead.

### **Year 10 (Foundation Stage)**

- Introduction to BridgeU career diagnostics and counsellor support for early exploration.
- Start using BridgeU for career mapping and university exploration.
- Participation in university presentations and fairs hosted at ARIS.
- Growing commitment to **extracurricular activities, leadership roles, and service-learning** beyond the classroom, with evidence documented in their developing portfolio.
- **CV Development:** Students begin drafting a first version of their CV with counsellor guidance, highlighting key achievements, skills, and experiences.
- **Career Day reflections** updated in Unifrog portfolio (or digital equivalent).
- **Optional Internship:** Students are encouraged to take part in an **introductory internship or job-shadowing experience** during the summer to begin understanding workplace expectations and career realities.
- **Summer options:** university visits, internships, or service programmes to expand exposure and confidence in real-world settings.

## **Year 11 (Preparation Stage)**

- Complete BridgeU diagnostics (personality, career interests, subject fit).
- Begin Unifrog portfolio: CV v1, activities log, and initial reflections (or equivalent digital platform).
- Undertake a career research project using BridgeU's career library, linking findings to personal interests and IB subject choices.
- Attend skills workshops on academic writing, note-taking, and critical thinking.
- Continue collecting evidence from community engagement projects, leadership, and service roles, strengthening the career portfolio.
- Mandatory Internship: All students participate in a structured internship programme, where they engage with professionals, gain real-world experience, and reflect on their learning. This experience forms an essential part of their portfolio and prepares them for future university applications.
- Counsellors review progress and link results to future IB subjects and career choices, guiding subject selection aligned with aspirations.

## **Year 12 (Readiness Stage)**

- Build shortlist v1( version 1) in BridgeU (8–12 universities, reach/match/safety, 2–3 regions).
- Finalise testing plan (SAT, ACT, IELTS, TOEFL, UCAT, LNAT, BMAT).
- Strengthen Unifrog CV; record 3–4 substantive reflections tied to CAS, EE, Service, or internships.
- Refine shortlist to 6–8 universities by June (shortlist v2).
- Draft UCAS personal statement or Common App essay in Unifrog over the summer.

## **Year 13 (Application & Transition Stage)**

- Lock the final university list in BridgeU (4–7 applications).
- Assign recommenders in BridgeU; provide them with CV and course list.
- Polish essays/statements in Unifrog → upload to BridgeU.
- Submit applications (UCAS, Common App, OUAC, direct).
- Record outcomes, scholarships, and final decisions in BridgeU.
- Prepare visa and **transition plans** with the counsellor.

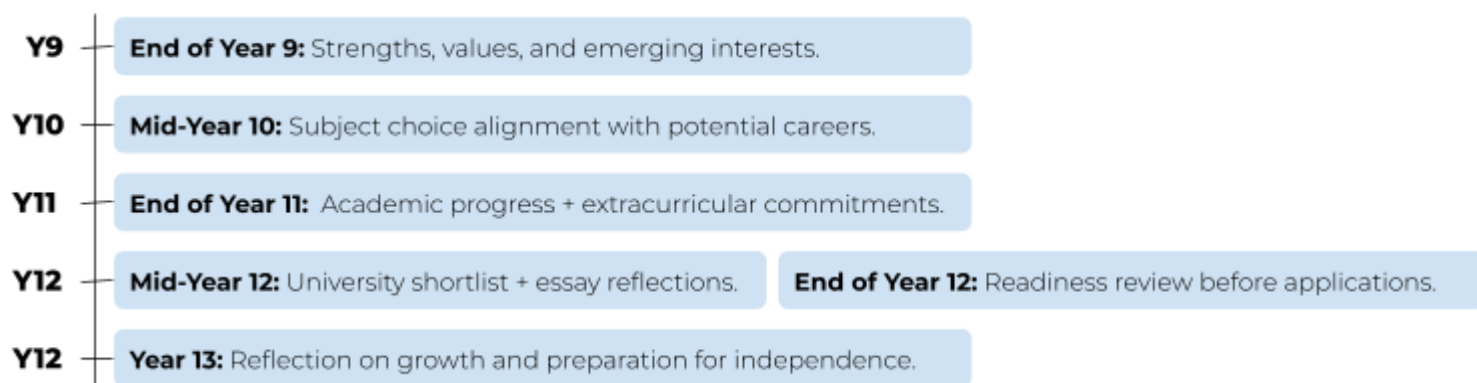
- Attend ARIS Transition Workshops (resilience, financial management, independent living, wellbeing).

## Timeline At A Glance

Year	Stage	Key Actions	Platforms
Year 9	Exploration	Career interest surveys, self-assessments, Subject selection, Career Day, and early subject guidance	Toddle (Reflections)
Year 10	Foundation	Begin using BridgeU; attend fairs/presentations; update reflections in Unifrog	BridgeU + Unifrog
Year 11	Preparation	Complete BridgeU diagnostics; start Unifrog CV & reflections; research careers; attend skills workshops	BridgeU + Unifrog
Year 12	Readiness	Build shortlist v1 (8–12 unis); refine shortlist to 6–8 by June; draft essays in Unifrog; test planning	BridgeU + Unifrog
Year 13	Application & Transition	Lock final list (4–7 unis); submit apps; manage references; record offers & scholarships; attend transition workshops	BridgeU + Unifrog

## 2.2 Reflective Checkpoints

Reflection is built into the ARIS timeline to keep students intentional:



Reflection is logged in Toddle for Year 9 and in BRIDGE U from Year 10 to Year 13

## 2.3 Who Does What

**Student (Owner):** Completes BridgeU/Unifrog tasks, meets deadlines, keeps documents consistent, and communicates progress.

**University & Career Counsellor (Lead):** Guides strategy, checks prerequisites, runs 1:1s, manages references, and locks internal deadlines.

**IB Coordinators (Support):** Ensure subject choices and predicted grades align with university entry requirements.

**Teachers/Advisors (Contributors):** Provide academic feedback, write recommendations, and review drafts when asked.

**Parents/Guardians (Partners):** Encourage independence, assist with finances/logistics, monitor timelines, but allow students to take the lead.

## 2.4 One Process, Two Tools



**BridgeU** → Career diagnostics, subject–programme alignment, shortlist building, task/deadline tracking, recommender and submission management.



**Unifrog** → Reflections and journals, skills log, CV/activities builder, essay and personal statement drafting, portfolio evidence.

**Rule of thumb:** *Draft & evidence in Unifrog → Decide & submit in BridgeU.*

## 2.5. Internal Deadlines & Quality Checks

[ARIS internal deadlines](#) are set 2 weeks (10 working days) before the [actual college deadlines](#) to allow time for quality assurance.

Counsellors verify before submission:

- Subject prerequisites and academic fit
- Document consistency (name, DOB, passport validity)
- Portfolio strength (CV, activities, reflections)
- Writing quality (authentic, polished, evidence-based)
- Scholarship/financial aid readiness

## 2.6 Support & Escalation



**Yellow flag (timeline risk):** weekly check-ins; parents informed.



**Red flag (deadline risk):** recovery plan; application list may be reduced to ensure quality.

**Wellbeing:** referral to the ARIS Wellbeing Team if stress escalates.

## 2.7 Connecting Strengths, Interests, and Values to Options

ARIS students learn to match their strengths and values with academic and career opportunities.

- **Subject Fit:** Counsellors check that DP/CP subject selections (HL/SL) align with entry prerequisites (e.g., HL Maths for Engineering, HL Chemistry + Biology for Medicine).
- **Values Fit:** Using Unifrog filters, students explore courses and careers linked to values such as sustainability, innovation, or social impact

- **Balanced Options:** BridgeU shortlists ensure each student applies to a mix of reach, match, and safety universities.

## 2.8 Setting Goals & Milestones

University planning at ARIS is structured around student ownership with regular support.

- **BridgeU Dashboard:** Tracks official and ARIS internal deadlines for essays, tests, references, and applications.
- **Unifrog Portfolio:** Stores CV, reflections, and activity logs tied to CAS, EE, internships, and leadership.
- **Counsellor Cadence:** Students meet counsellors every 4–6 weeks in Years 12–13 for milestone checks, in addition to advisory reviews.
- **Checkpoint Culture:** By the end of each term, students must show updated shortlists, CV drafts, reflections, and essays. Missing internal deadlines places applications at risk.

### In summary:

At ARIS, “knowing yourself” is not a one-off exercise. It is a **three-stage process** (Explore → Prepare → Apply). Students draft reflections and CVs in Unifrog, translate them into shortlists and applications in BridgeU, and move through structured milestones with counsellor guidance and parent partnership.

## 2.9 Gap Years & Alternatives (By Design, Not Default)

If a gap year, vocational programme, entrepreneurship, or micro-credentials are considered, students draft a **one-page plan** (goals, timeline, outcomes) and review it with counsellors and parents.

At ARIS, we believe that successful university and career journeys begin with self-awareness. Our University and Career Guidance Department uses a combination of BridgeU and Unifrog platforms, alongside personalised counselling, to ensure that each student develops a clear understanding of who they are, what they value, and where they want to go.

This dual approach ensures ARIS students are not only well-prepared applicants but also confident, reflective, and future-ready individuals.

## 3. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE UNIVERSITY PROCESS

At ARIS, students are at the centre of their university and career journey. While parents, teachers, and counsellors provide support, the ultimate responsibility for reflection, research, and decision-making rests with the student. Taking ownership ensures that the transition to higher education is intentional, confident, and successful.

### 3.1 Taking Ownership of Your Future

Taking ownership means recognising that your choices—not external factors—shape your future.

**Independent Exploration:** Use BridgeU to research universities and courses worldwide, and Unifrog to reflect on your strengths, skills, and activities.

**Decision Confidence:** Compare options side by side and choose pathways that align with your values, aspirations, and academic profile, rather than relying only on others' expectations.

**Accountability:** Track progress on your BridgeU dashboard, keep your Unifrog portfolio updated, and meet every ARIS internal deadline to avoid last-minute pressure.

**Key Mindset:** Counsellors can guide you, but you must drive your own journey.

### 3.2 Key Responsibilities and Best Practices

ARIS students are expected to develop their self-management skills by maintaining habits of organisation, discipline, and reflection. We expect our students to -

- ☐ **Stay Organised:** Store CVs, certificates, essays, and reflections in Unifrog; keep shortlists and deadlines updated in BridgeU.
- ☐ **Meet Deadlines:** Respect both ARIS internal deadlines (set 10–20 working days earlier than official ones) and official external deadlines. Missing ARIS deadlines puts your application at risk.
- ☐ **Prepare for Standardised Testing:** Register early and complete SAT, ACT, IELTS, UCAT, TOEFL, or other required exams on time; upload scores to BridgeU.



- ☐ **Consistent Naming:** Always use the same name as in your passport across all applications, test registrations, and documents.
- ☐ **Build a Strong Profile:** Use Unifrog to record academic achievements, CAS/service projects, leadership, extracurriculars, and internships—this portfolio feeds into essays, recommendations, and interviews.
- ☐ **Engage with Feedback:** Share drafts of essays, CVs, and personal statements with counsellors and teachers; revise based on feedback to strengthen authenticity and clarity.
- ☐ **Communicate Clearly:** Keep open and respectful communication with your counsellor. Update them promptly if your interests, choices, or circumstances change.

Non-negotiables: ARIS internal deadlines, consistent document naming, and active use of both BridgeU and Unifrog.

### 3.3 Reflection Prompts & Journaling Activities

University applications are strongest when rooted in authentic self-reflection. ARIS encourages students to use Unifrog journals and portfolios to capture their growth over time.



#### Reflection Prompts:

**CAS & Internships:** What skills did I develop? What challenges did I overcome?

**Leadership Roles:** How did I influence others, and how did the experience shape me?

**Resilience:** What obstacles have I faced, and what did I learn about myself?

**Values & Motivation:** How do my personal values shape my future goals?

These reflections provide rich content for personal statements, interviews, and essays while also helping students build a coherent story of growth.

### 3.4 Final Responsibilities – Closing the Application Process

Before graduation, every ARIS student is expected to:

- ☐ Notify counsellors of all application results and confirm their final university choice.
- ☐ Complete the Acceptance Sheet so the Career Guidance Department can track outcomes and advise on next steps.
- ☐ Declare scholarships or financial aid awards so counsellors can support with documentation, visa guidance, and transition planning.
- ☐ Prepare for transition: Attend ARIS workshops on resilience, independence, budgeting, and well-being to ensure readiness for university life.

### **In summary:**

Being an ARIS student applicant means taking full responsibility—building your profile in Unifrog, planning and submitting through BridgeU, meeting ARIS deadlines, reflecting on your growth, and closing the process responsibly. With this ownership and the guidance of counsellors and coordinators, you are positioned to step confidently into higher education.

## **4. GLOBAL UNIVERSITY APPLICATION PROCESSES**

ARIS students aim for universities all around the world. Since each country/system has different expectations—tests, predicted grades, essays, portfolios, language requirements—knowing how they differ is crucial. The University & Career Guidance Department provides structured help so every student can make choices that fit their academic profile, personal goals, and family context.

### **4.1 Overview of International Systems**

Here are the common dimensions by which systems differ. Understanding these helps you plan far ahead:

Dimension	What Changes by Region	Why It Matters
Grade / Diploma Requirements	Some universities require the full IB Diploma, specific Higher Level (HL) subjects, or equivalent national qualifications.	If you pick the wrong HL / SL subjects, you may not be eligible for certain programmes (Medicine, Engineering, etc.).

Standardized Tests	Required in some systems (e.g., SAT, ACT, subject tests, or national exams); optional or not required in others.	You may need to budget time and costs; missing or weak test scores can limit options.
Essays / Personal Statements / Portfolios	Some places use one universal personal statement (UK UCAS); others require multiple essays (USA/Common App); some require portfolios (Art, Design, Architecture).	You need to build evidence over time (reflections, projects, CAMs/CAS).
Language / Proficiency Exams	If English is not your first language, many systems ask for IELTS, TOEFL, or similar. Also, for non-English speaking countries or programmes, you may need language proficiency (e.g., German, French).	Need to plan preparation early; scheduling, cost, and test-availability matter.
Deadlines & Application Platforms	Varies widely: UK has UCAS; USA has Common App + individual portals; Canada has provincial systems; others have direct applications. Deadlines may be in Fall (for early action), or Jan-March, or even mid-year.	Missing deadlines is one of the biggest risks; ARIS internal deadlines help you stay safe.
Interview / Additional Exams	Some universities require interviews (UK, Europe, some US programmes), or additional exams (for Law, Medicine, Design).	You need to prepare not only academically but also for presentations, portfolios, and interviews.

## 4.2 Differences by Region: What ARIS Students Should Know

Region	Admissions Style	Tests & Requirements	Deadlines	Distinctive Features	How ARIS Supports
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United States (USA)	Holistic: GPA, IB predicted grades, essays, extracurriculars, leadership, recommendations.	SAT/ACT (many test-optional but useful for scholarships), AP optional, essays (Common App), 2 teacher + 1 counsellor recs.	Early Action/Decision: Nov 1–15; Regular: Jan; some rolling.	Flexible entry (undeclared majors possible); strong emphasis on essays & profile.	Essay drafting in Unifrog, proofreading, shortlist & deadlines in BridgeU, mock interviews, scholarship/financial aid guidance (FAFSA, CSS), Teacher recommendations.
United Kingdom (UK)	Academic-focused; predicted IB grades critical.	UCAT/BMAT (Medicine), LNAT (Law), portfolios for Art/Design. One UCAS personal statement for all courses.	Oct 15: Oxbridge, Medicine, Dentistry, Vet; Jan 31: general.	Centralised via UCAS; prerequisites strictly enforced.	Writing cycles for UCAS PS, internal mock deadlines, support for test registration, teacher references organised early.
Canada	Primarily grades-based; some universities require essays, portfolios, and leadership.	IELTS/TOEFL (if needed); IB scores converted by province/university. Few standardised tests beyond IB.	Nov–Feb (varies by province); some rolling.	Provincial systems (e.g., OUAC in Ontario) + direct apps; rolling admissions common.	Translation of IB scores, shortlist planning, guidance on essays/portfolios where required, and scholarship application support.
Australia & New Zealand	Strong reliance on IB scores + prerequisites.	IB → ATAR equivalency; HL subjects essential. Portfolios/tests for some competitive programmes.	Main intake Jan/Feb; mid-year intake in July.	Double-degree options are widely available; IB is well recognised.	Mapping IB to ATAR, checking prerequisites, assisting with merit scholarship research, visa/cultural transition guidance.
Europe (non-UK)	Varies by country. Often IB Diploma + national language or proficiency exam.	Platforms: Studielink (NL), Parcoursup (France); some require DELF (French), TestDaF (German). Portfolios for design/art.	Typically Jan–Apr; earlier for selective programmes.	Rapid growth in English-taught programmes; some early admission/pre-selection.	Counsellors highlight language/test requirements early, support with portfolios/interviews, check equivalencies & IB recognition.

Asia	Mixed: holistic (Singapore, HK) vs exam-driven (Japan, Korea, India).	Singapore/HK: IB + extracurriculars, some tests. Japan/Korea: entrance exams + language. India: JEE, NEET, CLAT for selective routes; IB increasingly accepted at int'l unis.	March–June (varies widely by country/university).	Highly competitive; cultural and language requirements often apply.	Identifying extra exams early, guiding preparation, clarifying IB recognition, and helping balance local vs. international pathways.
Africa (incl. Ghana)	IB is increasingly recognised; national exams are still common.	South Africa: NSC or IB equivalents. Ghana: WASSCE + IB equivalency. Some entrance tests are required.	Varies by country; often aligned to national calendars. Some mid-year intakes.	Regional universities are cost-effective; IB recognition is expanding.	Guidance on IB equivalency, local entrance requirements, scholarships, visa & relocation prep for students going abroad.

### 4.3 Scholarships and Financial Aid

Funding education is a critical part of university planning. ARIS guides local and global scholarships, including:

**United States:** Need-based aid (CSS Profile, FAFSA), merit scholarships, sports scholarships.

**UK:** Commonwealth, Chevening, and university-specific bursaries.

**Canada:** Entrance scholarships, provincial awards, Lester B. Pearson Scholarship (Toronto).

**Europe:** Erasmus+, DAAD (Germany), Eiffel (France).

**Asia:** HKUST and NUS merit awards, Japan's MEXT scholarship.

**Africa:** Mastercard Foundation, Ashesi scholarships, AIMS (Mathematics/Sciences).

## 5. ACADEMIC AND CAREER GUIDANCE INTEGRATION

At ARIS, preparing for university means more than completing applications. It is about aligning academic learning, career exploration, and holistic support into one journey. The University and Career Guidance Department works closely with teachers, counsellors, mentors, peers, and alumni to ensure students not only meet admission requirements but also thrive in higher education and beyond.

### 5.1 Aligning IB Learning with University Requirements

The IB Diploma Programme (DP) and Career-related Programme (CP) are not just academic qualifications—they are powerful platforms for university readiness. ARIS helps students use their IB learning strategically:

**Subject Selection Guidance:** Counsellors advise on IB subject combinations that open pathways to competitive programmes (e.g., HL Math for Engineering, HL Chemistry + Biology for Medicine, HL Literature + Global Politics for Law/International Relations).

**Skill Mapping:** IB skills such as inquiry, research, analysis, and critical thinking directly translate into competencies valued by universities, including independent learning and evidence-based argumentation.

**Coursework Integration:** Students are encouraged to leverage the Extended Essay (EE), Internal Assessments (IA), CAS projects, and Reflective Projects (CP) as evidence of academic curiosity and engagement with real-world issues.

**University Preparation Workshops:** ARIS runs targeted workshops on how universities evaluate IB components, such as TOK essays, HL Mathematics, and research-based assessments, ensuring students understand how their work adds value in applications.

### 5.2 How Coordinators and Counsellors Support the Journey

University planning at ARIS is a collaborative process, with each role offering distinct but complementary guidance:

**Coordinators:** Provide subject expertise, offer feedback on essays and personal statements, and write strong recommendations highlighting both academic strengths and character.

**Counsellors:** Lead one-to-one planning, manage BridgeU/Unifrog, run career days, track application milestones, and ensure students meet ARIS internal deadlines. Support the development of soft skills such as resilience, time management, and communication—qualities that are equally critical to success at university.

### 5.3 Peer Collaboration and Community Engagement

At ARIS, students are encouraged to learn from one another and to demonstrate leadership within their community:

**Peer-to-Peer Support:** Study groups, collaborative CAS projects, and student leadership opportunities foster shared growth.

**University Prep Workshops:** Students participate in peer review sessions for CVs, essays, and mock interviews, gaining confidence and constructive feedback.

**Community Engagement:** Service projects, clubs, and student leadership roles showcase initiative, empathy, and responsibility—qualities universities value in applicants.

### 5.4 Alumni Engagement: Case Studies & Testimonials

ARIS alumni play an active role in guiding current students by sharing authentic insights into the university journey. They are living examples of ARIS values in action. Their experiences help current students see how ARIS pathways lead to success worldwide.

**Case Studies:** Profiles of graduates in fields such as engineering, medicine, arts, and business demonstrate how their IB subject choices and ARIS experiences shaped their pathways.

**Alumni Panels:** Virtual and in-person panels connect current students with recent graduates, offering first-hand advice on transitioning to university, cultural adjustment, and academic expectations.

**Testimonials:** Short reflections from alumni are shared in the handbook and on ARIS platforms, giving relatable and inspiring perspectives. Add alumni case study templates for the [IBDP/ IBCP Pathway](#).

## 5.5 ARIS Alumni Overview

### A. ARIS Alumni Destinations

ARIS graduates have continued their studies at leading universities across the world. This section highlights where our students have received university acceptances, the fields they have chosen, and the available scholarships they compete for. These examples show that ARIS pathways (IBDP and IBCP) open doors globally. [University Destinations](#)

Continents	Representative Universities
Africa	Ashesi University, University of Ghana, Lancaster University, Coventry University (Egypt), University of Hertfordshire, etc.
United Kingdom	King's College, Queen's University Belfast, University of Manchester, University of Surrey, Queen Mary University, University of Dundee, etc.
Europe (non-UK)	EU Business School, Marangoni, FA, United International Business School, IE University, Erasmus University, Maastricht University, Vrije University, Heidelberg, Bocconi, Leiden University, etc.
United States	Savannah College of Arts & Design, Iowa State University, Arizona State University, Louisiana State University, Illinois Institute of Technology, etc.
Canada	University of Toronto, University of Alberta, York University, McMaster University, University of Ottawa, Trent University, Ontario Tech University, etc.
Asia	Ozyegin University, Sabanci University, Medipol University, Bahcesehir, Isik University, Middlesex University, New York University Abu Dhabi, etc.
Australia & New Zealand	Charles Darwin, University of Sydney,



## B. Fields & Programmes Chosen by ARIS Alumni

Field	Sample Programmes
STEM	Computer Science, Engineering (Mech/EE/CS), Data Science, Biomedical Sciences,
Business & Economics	Economics, Finance, Management, Marketing/Analytics
Health & Life Sciences	Medicine, Public Health, Pharmacy, Biochemistry
Arts, Design & Communication	Architecture, Animation, Fine Arts, Media/Communication, Fashion
Social Sciences & Humanities	International Relations, Law, Psychology, Literature/History,

## C. Scholarships & Awards (Highlights)

Type	Examples
Total Scholarships (Last 2 Years)	USD 7,240,000
Prestigious Named Awards	Lester B. Pearson (Toronto), QuestBridge, Mastercard Foundation, Chevening, DAAD, Eiffel, MEXT, Institutional Merit Awards
Students Receiving Aid	53%
Special Categories	AISA Award for Excellence, Margaret Sanders Scholarship, Merit-based University Scholarships, FAFSA/CSS-based, and Concourse Match.

## 6. GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

**BridgeU** – University guidance platform used at ARIS to manage career diagnostics, shortlists, deadlines, recommenders, and submissions.

**Unifrog** – Digital portfolio platform for reflections, CV/activities, and drafting essays or personal statements.

**UCAS** – Central application system for UK universities. Students can apply to up to 5 courses.

**Common App** – Widely used application platform for US universities; allows students to apply to multiple institutions with one profile.

**FAFSA** – Free Application for Federal Student Aid (USA) – determines eligibility for need-based aid.

**CSS Profile** – A Financial aid application required by many selective US universities in addition to FAFSA.

**SAT / ACT** – Standardised tests often used for admission to US universities (though many are now test-optional).

**IELTS / TOEFL** – English language proficiency exams required by many universities for students whose first language is not English.

**UCAT / BMAT / LNAT** – Specialist entrance tests required for certain courses in the UK (Medicine, Dentistry, Law).

**Predicted Grades** – Teacher-assigned projections of IB exam results submitted to universities.

**Personal Statement / Essay** – Written component of applications that demonstrates personal growth, motivation, and suitability for chosen courses.

**Rolling Admissions** – Universities review applications as they are received, rather than after a fixed deadline.

**Reach / Match / Safety Universities** – Categories used in building balanced shortlists:

- *Reach*: Highly selective, difficult to gain admission.
- *Match*: Well aligned with the student's profile.
- *Safety*: Likely admission based on grades and profile.

## 7. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

### Q1. What happens if I miss an ARIS internal deadline?

Internal deadlines are set earlier than official ones to ensure quality. Missing them may reduce the number of universities you can apply to, as counsellors will only support applications that meet ARIS standards.

### Q2. Can I apply to universities in more than one country?

Yes, but students must ensure they meet all prerequisites, deadlines, and

testing requirements. Counsellors will help balance multiple regions without overloading the student.

**Q3. Do universities recognise the IBCP?**

Yes, especially in Europe, the UK, and the US, but recognition varies by country. Students considering the Middle East or other regions where CP is not accepted should discuss alternatives with their counsellor early.

**Q4. How do scholarships work?**

Scholarships may be need-based, merit-based, or country-specific. ARIS helps students identify opportunities and prepare applications (essays, documents, references).

**Q5. What if I change my mind after submitting applications?**

Universities will only consider submitted choices. However, if you receive multiple offers, you can decide at the end of the cycle which to accept.

**Q6. How are recommenders chosen?**

Students propose teachers, but counsellors ensure the final selection reflects academic strengths and subject relevance.

**Q7. What should parents avoid doing?**

Parents should not write essays, fill out applications, or contact universities directly. Their role is to encourage, support, and assist in managing logistics.

In some cases, families may wish to involve external contacts or private agents in the application process. If this is the case, we kindly request that parents inform the ARIS University & Career Guidance Team in advance. This allows the school to provide the necessary information and avoid duplication or conflicting plans. Our goal is always to ensure that the student's application remains consistent, authentic, and aligned with university expectations.

**Q8. When should I start preparing for university applications?**

Ideally, preparation begins in Year 11, when students explore career interests, strengthen extracurricular involvement, and draft their first CV and reflections. By Year 12, students should finalise subject prerequisites, begin essay drafts, and create their university shortlist. Serious application work—including essays, credentials, and deadlines—should be completed by early Year 13.

**Q9. Do all universities require standardised tests such as the SAT or ACT?**

No. Many universities, especially in the USA, have adopted test-optional policies. However, some still recommend or require scores, particularly for competitive programs, scholarships, or specific majors (e.g., Engineering, Medicine). Students should always check the testing policy for each university on their shortlist and plan accordingly.

#### **Q10. How do I apply for scholarships or financial aid?**

**Scholarships may be merit-based, need-based, or country-specific.**

- In the USA, students complete the FAFSA and/or CSS Profile for financial aid.
- In the UK, scholarships are typically university-specific or through external organisations (e.g., Chevening, Commonwealth).
- Canada and Europe offer entrance scholarships or programs like DAAD, Eiffel, or Erasmus+.

Students should research deadlines early and use BridgeU to track scholarship opportunities and required documents.

#### **Q11. What are the key differences between applying to the UK, US, Canada and Europe?**

**UK:** Academically focused; students apply through UCAS, submit one personal statement for all courses, and offers are often conditional on final IB scores. Subject prerequisites and predicted grades are critical, and the process is highly structured with fixed deadlines.

**USA:** Holistic approach; students apply through the Common App or individual university portals. Applications include multiple essays, recommendation letters, and consideration of extracurricular activities, leadership, and personal qualities. There are several timelines (Early Action, Early Decision, Regular Decision), and universities may be test-optional but value a strong overall profile.

**Canada:** Primarily grades-driven; students apply through provincial systems (e.g., OUAC for Ontario) or directly to universities. Applications generally require fewer essays and minimal additional documents. Rolling admissions are common, and strong IB results often lead to advanced standing or course credits.

**Europe (Non-UK):** Varies by country and university. Many offer English-taught programmes, especially in the Netherlands, Germany, France, Spain, and

Italy. Applications may be submitted through national platforms such as Studielink (Netherlands) or Parcoursup (France), or directly to the university. Requirements often include IB Diploma recognition, specific subject prerequisites, and language proficiency (e.g., IELTS, DELF, TestDaF). Some programmes may request motivation letters, portfolios, or entrance exams, and tuition fees are typically lower, with options for EU and non-EU scholarships.

### **Q12. How should I choose between two universities that both offered me admission?**

Students should consider factors beyond ranking:

- **Program fit:** Course content, flexibility, and internship opportunities.
  - **Location:** Safety, cost of living, cultural environment.
  - **Financials:** Scholarships, aid packages, overall affordability.
  - **Career outcomes:** Employability, alumni network, postgraduate options.
- Discuss choices with counsellors and parents to ensure the final decision aligns with academic goals, values, and long-term plans.

## **MESSAGE FROM THE UNIVERSITY & CAREER COUNSELLOR**

Dear Students and Parents,

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the ARIS University and Career Handbook. This resource has been thoughtfully designed to support you through one of the most important journeys in education—planning for life beyond school. At ARIS, we believe that career guidance is not only about university admissions but also about empowering students to develop self-awareness, resilience, and a clear sense of purpose.

This handbook is your companion throughout the process. For **students**, it provides step-by-step guidance on exploring career interests, building a strong profile, setting goals, and navigating applications across different regions. For **parents**, it offers clarity on timelines, scholarships, and practical ways to support your child while encouraging their independence.

To help you navigate:

- **Start with Section 1** to understand ARIS's mission, philosophy, and the purpose of this guide.
- **Section 2** outlines the university planning journey from Year 9 to Year 13, with clear milestones and checkpoints.
- **Section 3** highlights student responsibilities and best practices to ensure success.
- **Section 4** provides insights into international application systems, deadlines, and scholarship opportunities.
- **Section 5** showcases how ARIS integrates academics, well-being, and alumni engagement to strengthen every student's pathway.

We encourage you to revisit this handbook often, especially at major decision points such as subject selection, application deadlines, and scholarship searches. Remember, this is a living guide that evolves with you—it is most effective when used actively and reflectively.

Together, with students taking ownership and parents offering balanced support, we will ensure that every ARIS graduate is prepared to step confidently into higher education and beyond.

Warm regards,

The ARIS University & Career Guidance Team